

WHAT HAS THE BIBLE DONE FOR WOMAN?

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WOMAN forms one-half of the human race; no system therefore is entitled to our highest regard which does not tend to promote her welfare. Woman is, in some respects, the most important part of our race. She is not only the mother and the nurse, but, to a great extent, the teacher and the trainer of us all. The human being is placed in her charge at a time when it is most susceptible of impressions; when, like the sapling, it can be bent in any direction, and trained in any form. And nothing can be more important than that she who has to give the first lessons to young humanity should herself be well taught; and that she who has to mould the youthful character should herself be rightly moulded.

Besides, the welfare of woman is the welfare of man. If she be elevated, man rises; if she be degraded, man falls; if she be happy, he is blest; if she be wretched, he is undone. The system, therefore, that is best for woman, is best for all; the system that ignores or injures woman, should be abhorred by all.

It is needful, therefore, if we would know the worth of the Bible, that we should ascertain its influence on the character and condition of woman. The clergy are aware of this, and hence their efforts to make it out, that the Bible has done so much for the elevation and the happiness of woman. They contend that all the advantages which woman has, in civilised countries, over woman in savage lands, are owing to the influence of the Bible. "Among the wild men of our forests and prairies woman is a slave," say they; "a beast of burden. She is the same," say they, "in the deserts of Africa, and in the wilds of Australia. When a man is a despot, woman is a drudge. She must not even

eat when he eats, but stand and wait while he devours the meal her hands have prepared, content to take his leavings for her share. But where the Bible has taught its lessons and done its work," say they, "woman is respected, loved, and adored: she is enlightened, virtuous, and happy."

It is thus the clergy preach. In our opinion, these clerical representations are false. We deny that woman in civilised countries is indebted to the Bible for all the advantages she enjoys over woman in barbarous countries; and we especially deny that the Bible has made woman in any country enlightened, virtuous, and happy. We contend that there is no tendency in the Bible to exalt woman, or to secure to her those blessings which are necessary to make her happy. That there are certain passages in the Bible that breathe, in some measure, a spirit of kindness towards woman, we allow. For instance: in the law of Moses, men are commanded not to reap the corners of their fields, but to leave them to be reaped by the widow, the fatherless, and the stranger. Men are also forbidden to glean their harvests, or to go a second time over their vines, and olive trees; and, in case they forget a sheaf when gathering in their harvest, they are forbidden to go back and fetch it. The gleanings and the forgotten sheaf are to be left for the widow, the fatherless, and the stranger. So far good; but what does it amount to? Such laws could be of little or no service to women dwelling in cities. They could not be of much service even to those dwelling in the country. They might be of none. If the Jewish farmers were selfish, they would, when forbidden to glean over their fields, be all the more careful to leave little to be gleaned. When forbidden to go back to fetch the forgotten sheaf, they would be all the more careful not to forget any. When not permitted to go over their fruit-trees a second time, they would go over them all the more carefully the first. And as the law did not say how *large a corner* of their fields they must leave unreaped, they might make it as small as they pleased, down to a rod or a yard. And even supposing the farmers not to be so selfishly careful, was it any great privilege to the poor widows to be allowed to scramble for a few scattered ears of grain, or to quarrel once in a life time over a forgotten sheaf? What must be the condition of woman, when the liberty to glean in a neighbour's field is regarded as so great a boon? And what must be the character of those laws and institutions which could contemplate such a condition as the normal,

the permanent, state of woman? Yet this is what the laws and institutions of the Bible contemplate. The Bible announces, first, that the poor shall never cease out of the land. It indicates, next, that woman shall be the poorest of the poor, the most helpless of the needy. It provides, in fact, that all the property shall be owned by the men,—that women shall never inherit property, except when the male heirs are all dead. Hence the widow, while afflicted for the loss of her lord, must suffer the loss of property, and, in consideration of being deprived of the farm, she shall be permitted to glean the scattered ears in the alienated harvest field.

“But there is a law against the oppression of the widow and the fatherless.” Yes, we are aware of it. But what does the law mean by oppression? Was it no oppression to deprive the widow and her fatherless little ones of the family estate, in favour of the privileged male heir, reducing her and them to beggary, slavery, or starvation? There was a law against oppressing the widow, but, in connection with the other laws of the Bible, it could do little or no good; and accordingly we find that the widow always *was* oppressed, and that the very ministers of the law did habitually, even to the time of Jesus, devour widows’ houses, and, by way of compensation, make long prayers.

Bible teachings in relation to woman must present themselves to minds free from prejudice, as the utterances of ignorant, rude, selfish, and cruel barbarians. In this sad light we imagine they will present themselves to all when carefully and candidly examined.

1. The Bible always treats woman as man’s inferior. Woman, according to the Bible, was not made for herself, but for man. Man, according to the Bible, was made for himself or his Maker; and if he could have got along comfortably alone, woman would never have been made at all. But it was found, on trial, that it was not good for man to be alone. Yet even then an attempt was made to meet man’s social wants without bringing into existence so dangerous a creature as woman. So God created various kinds of inferior animals and brought them to Adam; but among them all there was no help meet for man. So God, as a last resort, made woman, and placed her before him, and she seemed exactly the kind of creature he wanted. But in all this no regard is shown to woman; man is the only one whose interests are consulted. And hence the Apostle says, “Man was not created for woman, but the woman for

man." Accordingly woman must be subservient to man's interests or caprices. Man must be lord, woman a slave. Woman must be at man's disposal, and be subject to his will or whim in everything. He shall say whether she shall be his wife or concubine; she shall have no say in the matter. Man shall say how many he will have, and how long he will keep them; *they* shall not be consulted in any thing. The question shall never be, What is best for woman? but, What is agreeable to man? "Man was not made for woman, but woman for man."

This revolting principle runs through the whole Bible. "Thy desire, thy will, shall be subject to thy husband," says the Bible, and he shall rule over thee." Hence woman in the Bible is bought and sold like property. Thus Jacob buys Rachel and Leah with seven years' service for each. The prophet Hosea seems to get one of his wives for nothing, while he gives for another of them fifteen pieces of silver, and a homer and a half of barley. Even in the ten commandments the woman is put down as property, and ranked with the ox and the ass. Thus we read, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass." It is the pattern after which the inventory of the Southern plantation is drawn up, the "wife" alone being omitted; "Houses, slaves, oxen and asses." There is no law forbidding a woman to covet her neighbor's husband, because husbands were not property; and besides, wives could not *hold* property.

Hence woman is represented in the Bible as having no rights, or next to none. She has *duties*, but the *rights* belong to *man*. Man may take as many wives as he pleases; but no license is given to woman to have more than one husband. Man may have concubines, mistresses, as well as wives; woman must have no such thing. Man may turn away his wives at pleasure. All that is required of him, is that he shall give them a certificate of their dismissal. Woman is never allowed to turn away a husband. In the *New Testament* the law of divorce is altered, but the right is not extended to woman. Her husband may be the meanest, wickedest, the most loathesome wretch in existence, still, she must remain his slave for life.

2. Woman is insulted by other partial laws. No penalty is inflicted on the husband for being a father; but if a wife become a mother, she must both suffer a penalty, and pay

a fine; and if she be so wicked as to give birth to a daughter, the penalty is doubled. Lev. xii. Woman, in case of marriage, is required to give proof of her previous chastity; but no such proof is required of man. If a man happen to suspect his wife of unfaithfulness, however groundless his jealousy may be, he is authorized to subject her to trial; and the trial to which the hapless wife is required to submit, is neither more nor less than a legal murder. She is to drink a terrible poison. If the poison do *not* kill her, she is pronounced innocent; but if it *do* kill her, as of course, it will, she loses, not only her life, but her reputation also.

3. But this is not the worst. The Bible authorizes the father to sell his daughter to slavery and concubinage. You have the law in Exod. xxi, 7, 8. If a man sell his daughter to be a maid servant, she shall not go out as the men servants do. If she please not her master, who hath betrothed her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed; to sell her unto a strange nation he shall have no power; seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her." He shall not sell her to a strange nation; but he may sell her to a brother Israelite.

4. As we have said, the Bible allows men to have any number of wives they choose, and to take a number of concubines in addition. And God's favourites took a terrible advantage of this license. Nearly all the great examples of piety presented in the Bible were polygamists. Abraham had not only his Sarah, but his Hagar. Jacob had four wives. Of Gideon we read: "He had three-score and ten sons, for he had many wives. And his concubine that was in Shechem also bare him a son." How many wives David had is uncertain, but he is likened, by Nathan, to a rich man with exceeding many flocks and herds, while Uriah, the pagan who had but one wife, is spoken of as a poor man with but one pet lamb. We should judge, therefore, from the words of Nathan, that this very pious man must have had some hundreds of wives. Besides all that he had gathered together himself, God is said to have given him the wives of his master, Saul. Solomon, the wise man of the Bible, is said to have had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, a thousand in all. No fault is found with any of these men for having so many wives. On the contrary, they are expressly justified in their polygamy. Of Abraham we are told that he obeyed God's voice, and kept his commandments and laws. Gen. xxvi, 5. And of David it is said, "that he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from *anything* that

he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah, the Hittite." 1 Kings xv. 5. And what higher praise could be given of Solomon, than that he was the wisest man that ever was, or that ever should be? The New Testament is as far from condemning these wholesale polygamists as the Old. It says not a word in censure of any of them, while some of them it represents as placed high in the kingdom of Heaven. And it is worthy of remark, that Mahometanism and Mormonism, both of them legitimate and consistent offsprings of the Bible, give their sanction to polygamy.

5. The Bible presents examples of fearful injustice and cruelty to woman. God is represented as dooming every woman on earth, through all ages, to pain and degradation and death for one offence of one offender. He is represented as drowning all the women on earth, and all their babes, for the violence of the men. He burns up all the women and babes of Sodom with fire and brimstone. He turns Lot's wife into a pillar of salt, simply for looking behind her. He orders the destruction of all the women of Midian; and some twenty thousand wives and mothers are murdered in cold blood, and all their babes along with them, except their virgin daughters, who are reserved for a doom more horrible than death. All the women and children of the Amalekites are butchered for an offence said to have been committed by their forefathers many centuries before. And numbers of other unoffending women are slaughtered in the same way. Achan takes a garment and a wedge of gold from the enemy, and his wife and children are burnt. Jephtha makes a rash vow, and his youthful daughter is offered as a burnt offering. Saul kills the Gibeonites, and innocent mothers are bereaved of their sons for an atonement.

6. The Bible adds insult to injustice and cruelty. It abounds with libels on woman, some of them of the most infamous and outrageous character. Woman is generally represented as the offender, and man, poor innocent man, is always the victim. In the story of the Fall, it is woman that hearkens to the tempter, and eats the forbidden fruit. "Adam was not deceived," says the heartless Apostle, "but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression." And Adam himself, mean man, must cry, when questioned, "The woman that thou gavest me to be with me, she gave unto me, and I did eat." One of the most infamous libels of all is that against the daughters of Lot. It is too bad to be repeated. But Lot is not to blame; not he; the horrible

plot, and the execution of the plot, are all the work of the daughters. He did not even know what he was drinking; how should he? And how should he know what followed? The father is righteous Lot, the daughters monsters. In the case of Joseph, *he* does not tempt any one; how should he? It is the wife of his master that tempts *him*. In the history of Israel, it is not the Hebrews that seduce the Midianitish women; it is the Midianitish women that leave their homes to seduce the vagabond Hebrews. So in the history of Job; Job is all patience; it is the wife that loses her temper and says, "Curse God and die." And the Queen of Sheba must come from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the childish talk of a monster polygamist. This same monster polygamist, in his Proverbs, lays all the blame of prostitution on woman. Man is the simple-minded, unfortunate victim; woman is the crafty deceiver. Not content with this, the old profligate must libel the whole sex. "I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands." And he adds, "One *man* among a thousand have I found; but a *woman* among all those have I not found."

7. The Bible gives us no examples of womanly virtue. It gives us examples of mad devotion to priests, of wicked obedience to husbands, of treachery, cruelty and piety; but not of virtue.

The Bible inculcates false virtues on woman. It enjoins her to obey the clergy, her spiritual rulers; and we know what the tendency of such injunctions has been from the days of Eli down to the present age. It requires women to obey their husbands in all things, even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, not only telling lies at his bidding, but sacrificing her virtue for his accommodation. Jesus and Paul recommend life-long celibacy, and church history reveals to us the horrible results of these unnatural counsels. The Bible and Christianity have made nuns, saints, female martyrs, inquisitors, and female slanderers, persecutors, bigots, fanatics, witches, maniacs, and murderers, in abundance; but of noble, intellectual, virtuous, exemplary women they have made none. We have *had* good women, and even good men, in connection with the church; but they were good, not in *consequence* of their religion, but in spite of it. There are some men and women so exquisitely organized, that even piety itself is hardly able to pervert them; but we must not give religion credit for all the manly or womanly virtue which it fails to destroy.

In Proverbs xxxi., we have the Bible description of a virtuous woman and a good wife, and what does it amount to? Simply this, that she is very industrious, that she is always hard at work, and that, by labouring night and day, she is able to support her husband, and supply the wants of her children as well. We will read from the passage. "Who can find a virtuous woman?" Bad men always think that good women are very scarce. "Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have had no need of spoil." He knows she will earn enough to keep him, so that he will have no need either to go to war, or take to the highway. "She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens." She works night and day. "She considereth a field and buyeth it; with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good; her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hands to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are covered with double garments. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land." Of course, fifty or a hundred such wives, or one such wife, with a number of concubines under her, would make a man quite rich, and enable him to secure a seat in the magistracy or the legislature. "She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchants." The husband must neither make the goods nor sell them. The wife must do all. "Strength and honour are her clothing, and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness." Of course, if the husband does nothing else, he will keep his wife in subjection, and teach her how to talk to him. "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have gotten riches, but thou excellest them all.

Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." It is said that religion increases the value of slaves by making them more submissive and obedient. It does the same with wives, it seems.

Such is the Bible character of a good woman and a perfect wife. The qualities commended are just the qualities for which a vulgar, low-minded, Southern planter, would commend a slave; and for which an idle Indian would commend a squaw. The slave-holder feels no shame in letting his slaves support him in idleness. He boasts of what they can do, of the amount of wealth they produce for him, with the same unconsciousness of dishonour as that exhibited in the passage before us by the idle husband, enriched by the labours of his wife. So with the Indians of the Western prairies. They feel no shame when walking or riding at their ease, whilst their squaws trudge wearily along, sweating beneath their load of furs, or their heavy sack of grain. True, these Indians never shrink from the chase, or hang back in time of war. They will not, like the Bible husband, make the industry of their squaws an excuse for neglecting the hunt, or avoiding the battle. The Indian is bad enough, but it would be too much to expect the savage to be as bad as the saint. Still, substantially, you have the same characters, the same pictures of life, and the same selfish standard of womanly excellence, in the harem of the Bible saint, on the plantation of the Southern slaveholder, and in the wigwam of the Indian savage. And with a description like this before them, men can have the senselessness to talk of the obligations of woman to the Bible.

8. The Bible and Christianity have been fearfully productive of wars. They have kept the nations in deadly strife for centuries together. And some of the wars they have caused have been destructive beyond conception. Ecclesiastical writers themselves tell us, that such was the destruction of life caused by the crusades, that there was scarcely one man left to seven women. And those ruinous wars took off not only husbands and fathers, but sons and children. Whole armies of boys were formed and marched off to perish of disease and starvation, far from the eyes of their desolate mothers. The clergy thrived amid those disorders. They bought the estates of the crusaders for a trifle, and revelled at once in boundless wealth and boundless licentiousness. In other holy wars woman has been

tortured; dishonoured, and destroyed, or spared alive, with broken heart, to languish out a weary life in want and cureless sorrow, in untimely widowhood and cheerless desolation.

9. The Bible has always favored slavery, another curse which has always fallen most heavily on woman. It has favored slavery in its worst forms. The Jews were authorised to buy up all the nations of the earth, for bond-men and bond-women, and to have them as a possession, as property, and to transmit them as an inheritance to their children for ever. They were further authorized to buy up their poor neighbors, men and women, and hold them in bondage for six years at a time, and, in many cases, for life. And slavery has never ceased to flourish under Bible influences. It flourishes under its influences still. And in the most religious country of Protestant Christendom, woman still sees her husband and children torn from her side, or tortured in her presence, or is herself made an article of merchandise for the most revolting purposes, her womanly instincts and sympathies ignored, and turned to occasions of the most fearful suffering.

10. But let war and slavery be forgotten, and polygamy alone be remembered. Will any one contend that woman can be happy where this vice prevails? If woman is to be happy, she must have a happy home. Even man must find the principal part of his happiness at home, or find it not at all. If man has a happy home, the troubles of the market or the forum, the work shop or the farm, afflict him little. The mariner, tossed on the waves, can smile at the tempest, when he knows there is a safe and quiet haven into which he can run, where he and his bark can ride or rest in safety. So with the man buffeted with the storms of commercial or political life; what cares he? His peaceful, happy home—his home of love—is ever at hand, where he can hide himself from the storm, and screen himself from harm. But woe to the man who has no home, or but a home of strife and hate, when worldly ills befall. Yes; a happy home is much even to *man*; but to *woman* it is every thing. Let her home affections and delights be blighted, withered, and her all is gone. And will any one contend, we ask again, that woman's hope, and joy, and love, and confidence, can flourish in the dungeon dwellings of the polygamist? Impossible. The tendency of this vice, to destroy the comfort of domestic life, is sufficiently portrayed in the Bible. Take the family of Abraham. The two wives quarrel, and the first wife beats

the second. And the children quarrel, and the first wife is jealous of the second wife, and jealous of her son, and says, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with *my* son, Isaac." And she insists on the expulsion of the hapless secondary wife, and her helpless child, forthwith. And Abraham, for fear his elder wife should be vexed to madness, turns them out, with a scanty supply of bread and water, to wander in the wilderness. And the banished wife and child must suffer all the anguish of torn and bleeding hearts, with all the misery of starvation super-added.

We have next the family of Jacob. Here are four wives, all jealous of each other, as they were sure to be, and four kinds of children, as jealous of each other as their mothers. And the old polygamist father makes a pet of one and spoils him, and the elder all unite against the marred, conceited pet. And they cast him into a pit, to destroy him; but bethinking themselves that they might make a little money by selling him for a slave, they take him out again, and dispose of him to some travelling merchants for twenty pieces of silver. The old man is heart-broken, and fears that the fate of his son will bring down his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

Take next the family of David. Of the sorrows of his wives we have no information, but from the history of the children we may be assured their lot was anything but a happy one. The son of one wife falls in love with the daughter of another wife, and lures his sister into his power by pretending sickness, and then commits a crime, the most atrocious that man can perpetrate on woman. Absalom, the injured young woman's brother by the same mother, kills the unnatural offender. The news of the incest and murder among his children drives David almost to distraction. Absalom flies, but by and by returns and forms a plot to seize his father's crown, lest it should go to some half brother by another wife. The kingdom is torn by civil war, and Absalom perishes. Fresh family quarrels arise, and fresh troubles to the polygamist father, and endless hidden sorrows to the afflicted mothers. Other revolting deeds are done in this pious family, which it would hardly be becoming in ungodly people to describe.

How the monster Solomon fared at home, we may learn from the miserable story of his experience as given in the book of Ecclesiastes. Though rolling in wealth, and living in times of peace, he comes to the conclusion, that "all is

vanity and vexation of spirit." He thinks life is not worth having, and that the dead have the advantage over the living, and that he that has never been at all has the advantage over both. "Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead, more than the living, which are yet alive. Yea, better is he than both they which hath not yet been." This weariness of life was the natural result of wholesale polygamy and concubinage. The wretchedness of woman under such revolting family arrangements must have been extreme.

11. How is woman treated now, in our land of Bibles and Churches? She is denied the opportunity of obtaining a suitable education. In no country of Europe, and in no state of the American Republic, is woman allowed to share the same educational advantages as man. If she would emancipate her mind from superstition, if she would master the elements of science, and acquaint herself with the higher kinds of literature, and especially if she would distinguish herself as a scholar, an artist, or a philosopher, she must make the most prodigious efforts, and surmount the most stupendous and appalling obstacles, and only secure toleration by successes almost superhuman. Public sentiment—*pious* public sentiment—will not even allow her to indulge in those natural exercises, those agreeable amusements, which are necessary to her healthy physical development. She may pray, and listen to brimstone sermons, and walk leisurely and reverently to church and back, hymn book and prayer book in hand, with eyes that see not the beauty around her, and ears that hear not either the song of birds, or the sounds of life from other animals; but as for freedom of thought, freedom of speech, independence of soul, large and liberal views, and true womanly virtue, these are all forbidden, on pain of present obloquy, and of future eternal damnation.

12. She is not even allowed a fair chance of supplying her daily wants by honest labor. To many of the occupations, for which she is specially adapted, she has no access. When permitted to labor, she must have only half the wages given to man for the same kind of labor. She is excluded from her right of inheritance in most Christian countries. Every son, every grandson, and even every nephew is preferred to her. Even the widowed mother must stand aside, while her eldest son takes possession of the family mansion and the paternal estate. If there be no male heirs at all, the daughters may inherit; so the Bible enacts, and our Bible

statesmen acquiesce. In marriage she is deprived of her own property, unless she has the precaution to secure herself by some special deed, signed by her intended husband. It is so even in the United States. In many of the countries of Europe, woman is robbed and insulted at the same time. The husband is made to say in the marriage service of the church—"With my body I thee worship, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow"—when, in truth, he is endowing her with none of them, but taking hers instead. She even loses control of her own person in marriage, and becomes a slave. The husband can take her where he pleases, give her what accommodations, or subject her to what deprivations, he pleases, and use her or abuse her as much as he pleases. He can force her into the field to toil like a slave, or keep her a prisoner at home. He is not allowed to poison her, or to kill her at once with violence; but he can torture her to death in ways more cruel. Even her gifts and earnings are her husband's. Her children are her husband's, and he can take them from her side, and drag them to the antipodes. The laws of marriage and the laws of slavery are much the same, so far as woman is concerned.

13. These partial and cruel laws give rise to numberless crimes and fearful sufferings. Because a man by marriage obtains control over a woman's property, women possessing property are sought after by unprincipled men, and after being deceived, and robbed, and ruined, are cast aside with broken hearts, and blasted hopes, to languish out their days in utter wretchedness. Parents frequently claim the right to barter their daughters, giving youth, and beauty, and tenderness, to wrinkled age, and loathsome depravity, in exchange for a name and position. Women generally are kept in ignorance. The mysteries of nature and the laws of life are studiously concealed from them, and they are occupied or bewildered, instead, with the fictions of a gloomy fanaticism. They are not even allowed to understand the peculiar diseases to which they are liable. The priests find it convenient thus to keep the minds of women in the dark. They are enabled thus to control them and use them for their holy purposes. Hence you will hardly find an intellectual woman in ten thousand in orthodox circles, or in communities where religion is the ruling power. The few there are, are treated with contempt by the clergy and their adherents. A strong-minded woman is a term of reproach wherever the Bible has been allowed to form the public sentiment.

14. Woman is unjustly treated in other respects. That is an unpardonable offence in woman, which is only a trifle or an amusement in man. That which banishes woman from society, is not even censured in man. That which dooms a woman to despair, tends rather to improve the prospects of a man. The seducer is courted, the seduced abandoned. The deceiver is flattered, his victim undone. Even parents abandon their marred and ruined children.

15. The prevalence of prostitution is a proof how little woman is respected; how fearfully, how cruelly, she is wronged. The investigations made into the origin and causes of prostitution show, that, whatever Solomon may say to the contrary, prostitution is chargeable mainly on man—that here, also, woman is more sinned against than sinning. The degradation is not voluntary on the part of woman, but forced on her by man's injustice, unfaithfulness and cruelty. And the Bible has shown no tendency to diminish this mournful vice. It tends rather to increase it, as well as to aggravate its evils. It keeps man and woman in ignorance of those natural laws which alone can check indulgence and fit people for wise self-government. Out of two thousand prostitutes, in the city of New York, whose history was ascertained, it was found that nineteen hundred and forty-five were children of believing parents, had been piously brought up, and were themselves Christian believers at the time of the investigation. There were but sixty-five the religious sentiments of whose parents were unknown. And in no case did it appear that the parents of the unfortunates were unbelievers. Those States of the Union in highest repute for Puritanical piety—such as Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts—furnished the greatest number of those hapless creatures; while those States most noted for liberal views, furnished the fewest.

16. Orthodox Christians do nothing for the salvation of those unfortunates. What is done is done by heretics and unbelievers. The clergy *can* do nothing. Their doctrines and ceremonies are powerless, or powerful only for evil. The clergy and their pious orthodox supporters have no desire to lessen the evil, unless they can bring the victims into the church, and make them strictly orthodox, both in faith and manners; and that they cannot do. So they do nothing except helping to hinder others from doing anything. They will not hear of palliatives. They do not wish offenders to offend less, unless they can be wholly and at once reformed according to the vicious and unnatural

standards of the church. Nor do they wish the physical evils of prostitution to be abated; they rather wish them to be aggravated. Their principle is, "If people *will* sin, the *more* they sin the better, and the worse they suffer the better. The extremes of guilt and misery are the only means to bring them to repentance." Hence all that is done, almost all that is attempted, to abate the evil, is the work of unconverted, unperverted people. The pious orthodox are too pure to attempt half measures, or even to attempt anything by rational means. They oppose, denounce, and persecute rational, humanitarian reformers. Nay, so holy are our clergymen and church members, that they would dread the entrance of a reclaimed sister amongst them, though known to be thoroughly reformed. It is not virtue that they want, but respectability. It is not men's welfare that they seek, but their own advantage.

17. We may know how women are respected by the clergy and the churches, from the treatment which Frances Wright, Ernestine L. Rose, Lucretia Mott, and other intelligent and philanthropic women have received at their hands. Because they ventured to think for themselves, and assert their moral independence, they were insulted, derided, slandered, persecuted, mobbed, and permitted to escape with their lives only because the spirit of humanity among the irreligious would not allow them to put them to death. Virtue is nothing, intelligence is nothing, beauty, talent, and eloquence are nothing, noble bearing, refined manners, learning, wealth, and rank are nothing; all that can exalt, adorn, and dignify woman is nothing, in the eyes of the pious zealot, the Bible fanatic, if she refuse to bow to clerical authority, or to pander to clerical selfishness and pride.

18. Of course the clergy and their pious friends pretend great respect for female devotees. They laud them in their sermons, and flatter them in their social intercourse. "Oh! the dear, good creatures! How much is the cause of God and of the blessed Redeemer indebted to their zeal and devotion! They were last at the cross when the Saviour suffered; they were first at the sepulchre when the Saviour rose. They build and adorn our churches, and grace our congregations. They teach in our Sabbath schools at home, and accompany our missionaries to the heathen abroad. They distribute our tracts, and collect our funds; and everywhere prove themselves the most untiring, the most vigilant, the most successful aids of the blessed gospel.

Oh! nobly do they repay the infinite obligations under which the gospel has laid them." Such are the strains in which woman is lauded by ministers of the gospel. But what are such praises worth? What is their meaning? What is their object? Do they show that woman is really respected and honoured by the clergy; that she is the object of that reverence and devotion with which she is regarded by the truly enlightened and truly noble man? Just the contrary. Those clerical commendations of women are so many insults. They reveal, not reverence or devotion, but ignorance, fraud, and selfishness. They are the commendations which the slaveholder gives his obsequious slaves, or the huntsman his serviceable hounds. So Russian aristocrats commend their serfs. So white Americans commend their coloured neighbours, when they keep their places. Even Know-nothings will tolerate a foreigner if he will hand over to them his property, and work for them without wages. Even savages are willing to have women as drudges, and willing to commend them if they are servile enough. But is *this* doing justice, or giving honour, to woman?

19. We grant that woman is more respected and better treated than formerly; but it is not because the world is more pious, but because it is more enlightened and sceptical. It is infidelity, humanity, not Christianity, that is elevating the character and improving the condition of woman. Our Puritan forefathers were more pious than we, as the clergy know; yet their treatment of woman was cruel in the extreme. In proportion as they exceeded us in piety, they exceeded us in their insolence and inhumanity to woman. It was our very pious forefathers that fined, and banished, and murdered the beautiful, the eloquent and noble Anne Hutchinson and her interesting children. It was our pious Puritan forefathers that imprisoned innocent Quakeresses, stripped them naked to the waist, dragged them at the cart tail, and with horsewhips flogged them on their bare bodies, till their tender flesh hung in shreds, and their innocent blood streamed reeking to the ground. It was our very pious and orthodox Puritan fathers that hanged the noble Quakeresses on Boston Common, and that showed a zeal for God that would have sacrificed every intelligent and high-minded woman on earth, if suspected of heresy or unbelief. It was those same pious Puritans that fined a woman for kissing her child on the priest's high day. It is because the piety of our age is diluted with rationalism that

woman is treated less insolently and cruelly now; and it is because piety is not entirely supplanted by rational views, that woman does not receive all the respect and enjoy all the happiness to which she is entitled.

20. It is worthy of remark that those religious sects which have gone farthest in conceding to women their rights, are those which are little more than nominal believers, such as the old fashioned Quakers, and modern Unitarians. Both these denominations are in reality infidels. An infidel is one who rejects the authority of the Bible—who acknowledges only the authority of reason. And this is what the Quakers and Unitarians do. The great authority with the Quakers is the light within; which we call reason. And reason is the sole authority of the consistent Unitarian. When men become rationalists both in name and deed, they treat woman as their equal. They do not respect themselves less, but woman more.

21. And those persons who, in different lands, protest against the wrongs inflicted on woman, and demand for her a better lot both mentally and morally, are mostly rationalists, or heretics and unbelievers. No other classes *can* consistently demand the needful reforms. The Christian must go against his Bible if he would plead for woman's rights. Hence all who protest against the wrongs inflicted on woman, are denounced as infidels by the clergy. And the clergy, ignorant as they are in other respects, generally know whether a movement is Christian or infidel in its bearings.

22. And all the improvements in modern legislations with regard to woman, are in opposition to the Bible. The laws which recognise woman's right to divorce, her right to property, her right to complain of a husband's injustice, or of a father's despotism, are all antisciptural, and are attributable to the sceptical and philosophical tendencies of the age.

23. Again, woman cannot be happy without the proper exercise of her unbounded affections. She must love and be beloved. She must marry, and marry a man whom she can love, and from whom she can confidently look for returns of love. But the Bible makes no provision for this reciprocal affection. The Bible knows nothing about love in its highest forms. The writers of the Bible did not understand the subject. They seem not to have known of the existence of that mutual, unbounded, and self-sacrificing affection, which enlightened and virtuous people of the present day

call love. The idea of mutual affection, the reciprocal love of pure and equal minds, as constituting marriage, and as essential to the purity and happiness of domestic life, seems never to have entered their minds. They were selfish and brutal in their affections. Even Paul had no idea of the nature of true marriage, or of the higher forms of conjugal affection. The only object of marriage, in his idea, was the prevention of irregular indulgence; and the only thing which could justify marriage, in his judgment, was ungovernable brutal appetite. And the ideas of Jesus seem to have been no higher. Of that strange endearment, that reciprocal enchantment, that mutual adoration, that exalted and rapturous devotion, embodying all the elements of perfect friendship, with something infinitely higher and happier, inspiring worship and imparting bliss extatic and ineffable, leaving in the soul no void, no lack, no longing, but filling and overflowing it with pure and infinite delight, they never dreamed. Yet without this perfect, infinite, reciprocal affection, with all its rest and all its raptures, woman lives in vain.

24. Of course woman can never be satisfied with *divided* affection. The true, the normal woman loves but one, and seeks not to be loved by more than one; but she expects, as a matter of course, that that one will love her with an undivided heart. Polygamy, to her, is hateful and horrible as death. She loves home; she values it infinitely: but the dwelling of a polygamist is no home to the true and normal woman; it is a dungeon. To an enlightened, virtuous, noble-minded woman, the Bible stories of polygamous heroes and polygamous harems, are disgusting and revolting beyond measure. To be captured by such a monster, and lodged in such a harem, and subjected to its revolting indignities, would be almost as bad as the fabled tortures of Christian damnation.

25. Again: woman wants constancy in her mate, and must have it, or be wretched. She changes not, and can endure no change in her adorer. And where love is true, and its conditions right, no change takes place, except such change as that from the bud to the open blossom, and from the fragrant blossom to the delicious fruit. Divorce is for blind and brutal lovers.

26. Woman cannot be happy unless her children are happy. Her children's sorrows and her children's joys are her own. She loves her offspring with the same unbounded affection with which she loves her worthy and devoted hus-

band. A mother's love is proverbial; it has been so from the earliest ages of which we have memorials. That a woman should forget her child has been ranked among the things impossible. A woman mourning for the loss of her child is the emblem of the ancients for the last extremes of grief. Even the lower animals show a wild and unbounded affection for their offspring. A bear bereaved of her whelps is inconsolable; her rage is uncontrollable; and wo to the hapless man that meets her in her fury. Even the common hen, a proverb for pusillanimity on other occasions, is furious when her chicks are threatened, and will assail the most formidable foes in their defence. There is a horrid tale on record of a *man* who, when wrecked, took the plank from his own son, willing to save himself by his own child's death. We hope the story is false; but some believe it is true. No such revolting story could be true of woman. She dies for her child.

History abounds with touching stories of a mother's unbounded and undying love. When the Rothsay Castle Steamer was wrecked, a woman was on board with her babe. While the waves were washing over the deck, she took off her shawl, and wrapped it round her babe, and carefully bound the little one to her breast. As wave after wave dashed over her, drenching her with its waters, she clung the faster to her hold, and the faster to her babe. At last a heavier swell broke over the wreck, and mother and babe were washed into the deep. Still, even when drowning in the troubled waters, she was seen to raise her babe above the billows, and with her last breath heard to cry, "My child! my child!"

The child is dearer to the mother than she is to herself. No system, therefore, can make woman truly happy—happy as she ought to be—that subjects her children to indignity and sorrow. Yet this the Bible system does. It subjects the child to the priest, and makes him a spiritual slave. It subjects him to the tortures of the theological drill, and stretches his soul on the rack of orthodox piety. It frowns on his childish mirth and pleasures, and threatens his innocent sports with damnation. It hangs the heavens with black, and wraps the earth in gloom, and fills all space with malignant devils, or more malignant Gods. It agitates the youth with unearthly fears, and tortures him with cruel anxieties. It bewilders his understanding, paralyzes his judgment, and entangles him in endless perplexities. It teaches the mother, so the orthodox expounders tell us,

that her children are naturally and totally depraved; that they come into the world, as Wesley expresses it, half brute and half devil; that they are objects of God's wrath, and legitimate heirs of hell. It encourages the father to beat them,—to beat them with a rod,—and not to let his soul spare for their crying. It makes gloom, and tears, and poverty, a duty, and enjoins these things on pain of damnation. Yet it inculcates, at the same time, joy, and confidence, and thankfulness; thus demanding contradictions and impossibilities. Hence misery, or hypocrisy—nay, misery *and* hypocrisy, are made a necessity, and nature is set against nature, and humanity against humanity. Life is made a suicidal war. Faith is set against reason, and reason against conscience, and conscience against right, and right against law, and the mind is racked with infinite antagonisms. A smile, a jest, a humorous word, may damn you, yet murder, and the gallows may carry others direct to paradise. No greater calamity can befall a child than to become the subject of an orthodox concern for religion. The perplexities and terrors of the disordered mind are truly maddening. And the grief of the devoted, anxious mother, forced to stand by and witness the sad agony of her distracted child, knows no bounds. Even *pious* mothers often find it as much as they can bear to see the sufferings of their children under an orthodox concern for the salvation of their souls. How great and grievous then must be the distress of a sensible, unperturbed mother, to see a child thus tortured!

26. The enlightened mother loves science, and art, and culture, and beauty; and rejoices in the intellectual development, and lofty aspirations, of her children. But these the Bible condemns. True, people generally respect them and covet them in the present day; but that is because the Bible is no longer sole dictator. Science is anti-Christian. Philosophy is heresy and unbelief. Art and refinement are infidelity. Even health, and beauty, and wealth, and power, are anti-Christian, and life itself is only valued by the consistent saint, as a means of preparation for death.

27. The clergy tell us that polygamy was universal among the Pagans. This, however, is not true. It was common among the Jews, and it is common still among the Mormons and Mohammedans, who derive their religion from the Bible; but among the Greeks and Romans it was not common. The Roman law forbade polygamy; while in the Bible you have neither law nor counsel against it.

Among the ancient Teutons, the fathers of the mightier portion of our modern civilised nations, woman was treated with peculiar respect. "The old Teutonic tribes," says Mrs. Child, "had always been remarkable for the high consideration in which they held their women, and the respect with which they treated them. They habitually consulted them in all the affairs of war and government. The best of the Romans acknowledged that with regard to the dignity and purity of women, the sickly civilisation of their own country was keenly rebuked by the more healthy tone of their barbarian conquerors. Yet the Romans were far in advance of the Bible worthies. The introduction of this element of respect for woman into the Christian Church at an early period, had a very important and beneficent influence upon Christianity in the Western world." Again, says Mrs. Child, "Teutonic tribes married but one wife, and fully acknowledged the equality of men and women both in matters religious, and in matters political. The *Romans* prohibited polygamy by law. How far the Romans had advanced beyond Asiatic [Bible] ideas on the subject, is indicated by a remark of Cato, the Censor, who lived two hundred and thirty-two years before Christ. He was accustomed to say, 'They who beat their wives or children, lay sacrilegious hands on the most sacred things in the world. For myself, I prefer the character of a good husband to that of a great Senator.'"

28. Much is said about the tender and delicate regard of Jesus for woman. For myself, I see no signs of it in his history. I see signs of the contrary. According to the Gospels, he did not treat even his own mother and sisters with respect. He treated them rudely, heartlessly, cruelly. He called the poor Syrophœnician woman a dog. He allowed one woman, if the horrible story is to be credited, to wash his feet with her tears, and wipe them with the hair of her head. A man that had any delicacy of feeling, would sooner drown himself than allow a woman so to degrade herself. A man that in our day should allow a woman to wash his soiled feet, and wipe them with the hair of her head, would be branded as infamous for ever. Even death itself would hardly be deemed atonement sufficient for such an offence, for such an outrage upon womanly delicacy.

29. The tendency of the Bible to encourage injustice and cruelty towards woman, may be seen in the writings of Wesley. He recommends that the first lesson which young husbands should teach their wives should be, *to know their*

place as their husband's inferiors—to regard their husbands as their lords and masters—to yield obedience to their husband's commands; and he recommends husbands, if their wives do not obey them promptly, to enforce obedience by suitable correction. No wonder the wife of the Methodist tyrant ran away, choosing rather to starve than to live in such bondage.

30. The clergy quote the words of Paul, that in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female; and tell us that Christianity makes the sexes equal; whereas nothing can be more false. Christianity does not make men and women equal either in the church, the family, or the State. In the church, a woman is not permitted to speak, or even to ask a question. In the family, she is to obey her husband, as the church obeys Christ, in all things. In the State, she is left to the spirit of the age; for Christianity does not demand for her a single right, or ask for her a single favour. And the practice of the church, so far as the sceptical spirit of the age will permit, is in accordance with Christianity. A woman is not allowed either to preach, to exhort, or to pray, aloud, in the orthodox churches. They may teach in Sabbath schools; carry round theological trash in the shape of tracts; collect for missionary societies; tease husbands, brothers, neighbours and children, into compliance with church demands; raise funds for the minister; get up fine parties for him; pamper and caress him, and applaud his sermons, and damn his enemies, and do any other kind of ecclesiastical drudgery: but they must never think of equality with male members of the church, on pain of dishonour and excommunication. Still less must they study science, or make themselves familiar with liberal books, or question the authority of the priesthood, or modify their creed. And if, through the force of truth, they should become unbelievers, they are given up at once to shame and sure damnation. It is bad enough for a *man* to be an unbeliever; but for a *woman* to disbelieve, is the sin that is not only unpardonable, but utterly inexcusable. In short, woman may be a *slave* in the church, and if she is a *willing* slave, working continually for the aggrandizement of the church and clergy, she shall be praised and flattered; but if she aspire to anything better than slavery, she is hated, shunned, and damned.

31. The Bible abounds with obscenities—obscenities, many of them, peculiarly offensive to pure-minded and high-minded women. We cannot give the passages; decency

forbids; but in no book have I met with stories, descriptions, and allusions, calculated more rudely and painfully to shock a modest and cultivated woman, than some in the Books of Moses, the Song of Solomon, and the Prophets. Even the New Testament is not free from revolting obscenities. It is melancholy to think that the delicate hands of woman should be employed in circulating a book containing such indecencies. This terrible fact is itself a proof how much the Bible and the clergy can do for the corruption and degradation of woman.

32. Woman's virtue is secure—first, in proportion to her intellectual development; and, second, in proportion to her independence. When woman is ignorant, dependent, poor, she readily becomes the victim of the base, the rich, the powerful. And the Bible favours both ignorance and poverty, credulity and servility, and thus renders the ruin of millions inevitable. Secularism favours the intellectual cultivation, and the physical independence, of woman, and thus helps to promote her virtue and happiness.

33. The Bible gives no sufficient rules for the conduct of men and women in the marriage state. There are a hundred matters of importance to the happiness of husbands and wives, parents and children, not once touched either by the Old Testament or the New. There are a hundred duties, not one of which is enjoined. There are a hundred errors, against not one of which the husband or the father, the wife or the mother, is warned. Hence numberless marriages are unhappy. Hence hopes, bright as the morning, give place to gloom and despondency, dark as the night. Hence millions that should have passed their days in joyousness, languish in misery, or die in their prime. And millions of children are born with worthless constitutions, with bodies and minds unfitted for the duties and pleasures of life. And because the Bible is regarded as a perfect rule of duty, the evil is looked upon as incurable, and generation after generation grope their way through the murkiness and misery of vice, to untimely and unhonoured graves. Nay, public sentiment is so corrupted and perverted through belief in the perfection of the Bible, that those who see the evil and perceive the remedy, are deterred from interfering by the dread of public reprobation.*

And all this while the clergy, blind leaders of the blind, rave about the blessed influences of the Bible, and about

* A tract touching on some of these subjects may be looked for by and by.—J. B.

woman's obligations to its teachings. Thus men put darkness for light, and light for darkness; call evil good, and good evil. But shall it be so for ever? Will day never dawn on the night of the soul? It dawns already. The night is past; the morning breaks; and the sun of truth already appears on the horizon. The condition of our race is not hopeless. The bigot and the brute, the fanatic and fury are not to rule mankind for ever. Truth is asserting her rights, and virtue is rising to dominion; and man and woman, after many ages of darkness, and gloom, and sorrow, shall be enlightened, happy and free.

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